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ABSTRACT

The 1,514 students graduating from the College of Arts and Sciences of the University of Washington (UW) in June 1974 were asked to complete a survey of student characteristics, opinions of educational experience at UW, and future plans. The response group of 895 (59 percent of the total) consisted of 43 percent "natives" (entered UW directly from high school), 30 percent transfers from other four-year institutions (senior college transfers), and 27 percent community college transfers. Community college transfers were heavily concentrated in the social science area when compared to the other groups, and, like their senior college transfer classmates, were represented far less in the natural sciences than the UW "natives." Community college transfers rated student-faculty interaction as the area in their department needing the most improvement, and evidenced other feelings of isolation on campus. The most striking difference between community college transfers and other graduates was in respect to future plans; only 27 percent of the community college transfers anticipated going on to graduate school compared to 41 percent of the "natives" and 38 percent of the senior college transfers. Fewer had developed definite career plans, and a significantly greater number expected to obtain employment not leading to a career. (AH)

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Characteristics of University Graduates

Who Were Community College Transfers

Clifford E. Lunneborg and Patricia W. Lunneborg

College graduates who were community college transfers differed from other graduates in terms of perceived neglect by the University and of future plans. Fewer were going to graduate school, more were going to work in non-career-related jobs, and more were concentrated in social science and education.

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Characteristics of University Graduates Who Were Community College Transfers

Community college students who transfer to universities have consistently been reported to perform less well than students who start their higher education at a university or other four-year institution. Hodgson and Dickinson (1974), for example, recently found that community college transfers earned lower grades in upper division course work, dropped out earlier, and graduated at a lower rate than "natives." Thus, as a group, community college transfers are less successful university students. Many, however, do meet that most important criterion of success, the bachelor's degree--57% in the Hodgson and Dickinson study--and to better understand the problems of transition between community college and university study, the characteristics of this set of graduates need to be articulated. If community college degree recipients are indistinguishable from other degree recipients, those concerned with the problems of transfer could effectively ignore them and focus upon students less likely to graduate. In counseling efforts at community colleges, greater attention could be given to educational opportunities other than the university, and at the university, greater attention could be given special support for students whose predicted academic performance was poor.

If, on the other, community college baccalaureates differ appreciably from other graduates on a number of dimensions importantly related to higher education, then college student personnel workers would have to pay attention to the needs of this successful group as well. Even community college transfers who have all the hallmarks of University success--high test scores, good grades--may need singling out for advising in both educational settings if they are to profit as much as the "native" from attending a university.

Method

Students graduating from the College of Arts and Sciences at the University of Washington (UW) June 1974 were asked to complete a "Survey of Graduating Seniors." Those responding, 895 of 1514, consisted of 43% "natives" (entered UW directly from high school), 30% transfers from other four-year institutions (called here senior college transfers), and 27% community college transfers. The survey sought information of three kinds: characteristics of the graduates, opinions about educational experiences at the University, and future plans. A report describing the items in detail and analyzing responses in terms of sex and degree group (arts, social science, natural science, humanities, miscellaneous) may be found in de Wolf (1975). For the purposes of the present study, item responses are compared in terms of the three types of institutional origin.

Results

Characteristics of the Graduates

The distribution of the sexes was different for the community college sample than for the other two groups. While the percentage of males in the native group was 53% and in the senior college transfers 49%, 61% of community college transfers were male. In terms of the time at which the three groups started college, there was a dramatic difference, with only 72% of community college students entering college within a year of high school graduation as compared to 98% of natives and 93% of senior college transfers. Paralleling this result was the time at which students decided on their major. Fewer of the community college transfers had decided major area by the end of the freshman year when contrasted to the other two groups.

One of the most important differences among the graduates was the distribution of majors. Table 1 presents these data in terms of percentages. The χ^2 test of cell frequencies was significant beyond the .01 level (8 d f, $\chi^2 = 36.18$). Community college transfers were much overrepresented in the social science area and, like senior college transfers, underrepresented in the natural sciences compared to the native group entering the university directly from high school.

Insert Table 1 about here

Opinions of University Education

Community college transfers shared a host of opinions with respect to major departments with the other graduates. For example, there were no differences among groups in the popular characterizations they gave faculty members--all saw major faculty as primarily "research-oriented," "intellectual," and "realistic." The same percentage of the three groups (30%) complained that their departments did not place enough emphasis on undergraduate education. Some 70% of each group, nonetheless, expressed positive feelings towards their departments and between 57-64% of each group said they would pick the same major again. Finally, only 14% of each group rated instruction in the major as less than "good."

"Do you feel that as an institution this University places sufficient importance on undergraduate education?" "Yes" to this item was endorsed by fewer community college transfers than the other two groups, and the extent of this dissatisfaction was made very clear in the "comments" section at the end of the survey. "The undergraduate level programs are underbudgeted and overshadowed by the graduate schools." "Most instructors were more interested

in themselves and their research than in the progress of students." "For two years I have been frustrated by the majority of instructors who place little or no value upon the undergraduate students. I won't recite the entire list of missed appointments, aloof attitudes, and downright rudeness, but I've a raw deal insofar as personal communication with instructors is concerned." Nonetheless, there was a slight tendency for community college transfers to rate the quality of instruction outside their major higher than the other groups.

This perceived lack of interaction with faculty was also revealed by an item asking graduates for the area needing most improvement in their department. Top-ranked for community transfers was "student-faculty interaction," while a too-theoretical orientation was top-ranked by the other students. Likewise, more community college students felt advising needed improvement.

A sense of isolation from others on campus was also expressed by community college transfers in an item dealing with the most important contribution to their university education. While fewer of them cited contacts with other students, more of them cited directed independent study. Student comments illuminated this lack as an interaction between characteristics of the university (bigness, research-orientation, graduate programs) and the characteristics of this special group of students (commuter, employed, married, shorter stay): "If I had not commuted and been married I would have entered more into extra-curricular activities. I really grew attached to the U even though not connected as much socially as I was at my two-year college." "Two years allows you little chance to get acquainted with your major and professors and take steps (without faults) toward the proper end.

My record would have been more impressive and satisfying to me had I initiated a four-year program."

In spite of the fact that they had been at the University only half as long, community college transfers rated the University's intellectual impact upon such concepts as "law," "nationalism," and "social equality" the same as did the natives. (Senior college transfers, in contrast, were less affected.) Thus, the overall instructional mission of the University was no less effective with community college students; it is the way in which teaching and student-faculty relationships are conducted that is differentially perceived by them.

Future Plans

The most striking differences between community college transfers and other graduates occurred with respect to future plans. Table 2 reports the percentages indicating each of ten possible activities the year following graduation. While 41% of the natives and 38% of the senior college transfers anticipated being in school, this was true for only 27% of the community college sample. Of these 27% continuing, fewer were moving into new areas of study (12%).

Plans for professional graduate study were the most affected with only 11% of the community college transfers going on to medical school, law school, etc. Finally, those community college transfers who were changing their graduate major from their undergraduate major were moving towards education and social science, areas in which they already dominated.

Asked why they would not be going to graduate school the next year, students who had come from community colleges again differed from the other students. They were more likely to cite family responsibilities and financial

obstacles or to perceive their undergraduate records as inadequate. In contrast, natives and senior college transfers were tired of school and wanted practical experience. Consistent with finding that community college transfers have greater economic needs, Table 2 reports that more of them planned to work. While the percentages entering career fields were essentially the same across groups, there were, regrettably, far more community college transfers who anticipated "working full-time at a job which will probably not be my career field."

Insert Table 2 about here

Students were asked to write out the name of their intended occupation. These career choices were coded by the authors using the vocational interest schemes of Roe and Holland. Looking at the proportions in Roe's eight Groups, community college transfers were overrepresented in Service and underrepresented in Science. The same shift was observed coding occupations into Holland's six areas—far more community college students were going to enter Social occupations and far less Investigative occupations. These results can be compared with the survey item in which students coded their own intended occupation. While a career in the social sciences was seventh-ranked among natives and fifth-ranked among senior college transfers, it tied with education as the number one choice among community college graduates. Lastly, the anticipated employer of these graduates revealed that community college transfers were going to work much less on a "self-employed" basis, and more for governmental and other service agencies.

Discussion

University baccalaureates who were community college transfers do not appear to be like graduates who started college at a four-year institution. The differences between the two indicate greater educational and vocational restriction of the community college student. Such students typically major in sociology, society and justice, political science, etc, and proceed from the University into the world of work, not really anticipating, at least to start with, that they will be pursuing a career related to their major. This educational outcome appears to be tied to perceptions of the University as impersonal and unconcerned about undergraduate training. Compared to the "natives" community college transfers have a difficult time utilizing the University's resources to expand their educational and vocational options. But in addition, their channelization is influenced by their community college preparation which predisposes them away from the natural sciences, away from professional aspirations, and away from a career development link with their liberal arts majors. "The U needs a service that would sit down with the new student and try to determine where his/her interests lie and prepare a plan to follow for the first year. This is so that students will really know where they are going and not wonder if they're in the right place academically and vocationally." "There should be more emphasis on integration of vocational and theoretical studies in the undergraduate programs." "Why can't a person be prepared for a job in four years? Not everyone can go to graduate school." "My only regret is that I spent two years at a community college and didn't get enough background to compete for the small number of grad school and job opportunities." "I may have to get some sort of additional vocational training since I've never wanted to be a typist and that

seems to be all I'm qualified to be after four years of typing my now worthless term papers." Thus, when asked to check which of several student services needed the most improvement, community college transfers endorsed them all equally, i.e., placement advising, departmental advising, counseling services, career classes, and employer interviewing.

The conclusion of Appel, Berry and Hoffman (1973) that the multiversity discover ways to facilitate one-to-one relationships between students and with faculty is all the more compelling in the case of the community college transfer. But in addition to personalizing the university experience, its vocational implications need to be made clearer starting in the community college setting.

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Table 1

Distribution of Majors among Graduates of
Different Institutional Origins

Major Area	Institutional Origin of Graduate			
	High School (N = 385)	Community College (N = 238)	Senior College (N = 272)	Total Group (N = 895)
Arts	7 ^a	5	10	8
Social Science	26	40	28	30
Natural Science	34	20	20	26
Humanities	26	28	34	29
Miscellaneous	7	7	8	7
	100	100	100	100

^aTable entries represent percentage of origin group
choosing that major area.

Table 2

Percentages Responding to Most Probable
Activity Year after Graduation

Activity	Institutional Origin of Graduate			
	High School	Community College	Senior College	Total Group
Graduate study, same major	13 ^a	11	10	12
Graduate study, other major	5	1	6	4
Professional school	19	11	17	16
Other school	4	4	5	4
Total in school	41	27	38	36
Career, major-related	18	19	18	18
Career, not major-related	7	8	8	8
Work, non-career	25	36	26	28
Military	2	3	2	2
	52	66	54	56
Travel and no work	7	6	9	7

^aTable entries represent percentage of origin
group choosing that activity.

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